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III. — *The Time Element in the Greek Drama.*

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IN the *Supplices* of Aeschylus, when the ship of Aegyptus' sons is seen, Danaüs consoles his daughters by saying that a landing cannot be effected by them so late in the evening (764-775). But only sixty lines farther on (836), a herald arrives from the fleet; and no hint is given that this procedure is anything remarkable.¹ What are we to infer? Surely that the night has passed in the interval; and we note that the intervening verses (776-835) are taken up by a lyric passage.

I would therefore present this theory: *When the chorus is alone, or practically alone, on the stage,² time may elapse, to the extent of hours or days or even longer.* This explains at once the passage of the night in the *Supplices*.

When we examine Aeschylus' *Persae*, we find that there are two logical gaps in time: Atossa's dream, by the psychology of such phenomena, should be simultaneous with the defeat of the Persians at Salamis; then a gap of months occurs, from the autumn to the early spring, when the messenger arrives with news confirming the evil presage of the dream; finally, Xerxes and the remnant of his army arrive, days or weeks later. The messenger has presumably been dispatched as soon as Xerxes reached the safer portion of his empire (ἐστιοῦχον γαίαν, 511), that is, as soon as he has crossed into Asia, and must have gained materially on the slower moving army, remnant though it was. The vision of Darius occurs in this interval.

In the light of the theory just advanced, the *Persae* is to be interpreted as follows: (1) narration of Atossa's dream, followed by (2) the messenger's evil tidings; the gap inter-

¹ Cf. Campbell, *Cl. Rev.* IV, 304; but also Verrall, *The Ion of Euripides*, p. lii, n. 1.

² I shall use the term 'stage' to mean the entire place where actors and chorus perform their parts, without reference to the question whether there was a raised stage or not, since for the present purpose that is immaterial.

vening being suppressed, or represented by the trochaic passage 215-248, the dialogue between Atossa and the chorus, which is practically equivalent to a choral passage, as it does not advance the action of the play in any respect. After the messenger's report comes a lyric passage, then (3) the vision of Darius, another choral passage, and finally (4) Xerxes' arrival; the lapse of time between the coming of the messenger and that of Xerxes is represented by one or both of these lyric passages.

This use of the chorus appears clearly also in the *Agamemnon*. Scene I: the messenger sees the signal-fire on Arachnaeum, giving news of the capture of Troy (1-39). The chorus then occupies the stage for over two hundred lines (40-257), though without any noticeable lapse of time. Next Clytaemnestra comes in, having already heard the news; this is Scene II (258-354). Now comes a long gap in time, allowing for Agamemnon's homeward voyage; this is filled by the stasimon that here follows (355-488). Scene III now begins (489): the herald from the fleet appears in the distance, and on entering gives his news. That a considerable space of time has elapsed is indicated not only by the length and storminess of the voyage, as it is described by the herald, but by various passages, notably in Clytaemnestra's greeting to the herald (587-589): "Long ago did I utter cries of joy, when the first nocturnal messenger of fire did come, telling of Troy's capture and destruction."¹ Earlier in the play, she speaks of the present morning as that of the day after Troy's fall.² During the next stasimon (681-809) time passes sufficient to allow Agamemnon with his host and triumphal array to reach the city. From this point on, the time inconsistencies are but slight.³

¹ 587-589: ΚΑ. ἀνωλόλυξα μὲν πάλαι χαρᾶς ὑπο,
 87' ἤλθ' ὁ πρῶτος νύχτιος ἀγγελος πυρός,
 φράζων ἄλωσιν 'Ιλίου τ' ἀνάστασιν.

² 278-279: ΧΟ. ποίου χρόνου δὲ καὶ πεπόρθηται πόλις;
 ΚΑ. τῆς νῦν τεκούσης φῶς τόδ' εὐφρόνης λέγω.

320: ΚΑ. Τροίαν Ἀχαιοὶ τῇδ' ἔχουσ' ἐν ἡμέρᾳ.

³ Verrall's interpretation of the *Agamemnon* (cf. the Introduction to his edition of the play) and of Euripides' *Andromache* (*Student's Greek Tragedy*, pp. xviii f.;

In the *Choephoroe*, when Orestes knocks at the door of the palace, night is already descending, for he says to the servant who opens the door, after bidding him announce him to the masters of the house, "And make haste, for the chariot of night is hastening on with darkness, and 'tis time for travellers to come to anchor in the hospitable homes of strangers."¹ He and Pylades are received and entertained. Aegisthus is summoned and killed; Clytaemnestra receives the same fate. Orestes now spreads out before the all-seeing Sun the net in which his father was entangled (983 ff.), and sets forth upon his journey to Delphi (1034 ff.).² How are we to understand this? *The night passes in the entertainment of the guests*; opportunity for this is given by the choral passage 783-837. Then the exposition of the web follows naturally in the early morning, when the sun is just visible in all his freshness, and Orestes starts to Delphi with a full day of daylight before him; for unless we understand the night to have passed, he must start off at nightfall, contrary to all Greek habits of travel, and the sun must have delayed his course long enough to see the fatal web displayed after the slaying of Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra.

Again, in the *Eumenides*: In the early part of the play (93) Orestes leaves Delphi for Athens, under Hermes' guidance, while the Furies sleep; they are roused by the ghost of Clytaemnestra, endeavor to find Orestes, and are put on his track by Apollo. At this point (234) comes not only a gap in time, but a change of place, from Delphi to Athens. As the distance is about one hundred miles, we must allow Orestes some three days at least to accomplish it, though some of his expressions imply possibly months or years of

Four Plays of Euripides, pp. 1-42) cannot be accepted, inasmuch as his view involves a wanton deception of the audience. On the contrary, the poet constantly endeavors to keep his hearers *au courant* of the story; in the *Oedipus Rex*, for example, Oedipus extracts the story of Laius' death from the sole survivor of Laius' train, though he should long ago have collected the evidence on the affair.

¹ 660-662: τάχυνε δ', ὥς καὶ νυκτὸς ἄρμ' ἐπέλγεται
σκοτεινόν, ὥρα δ' ἐμπόρους καθιέναι
ἄγκυραν ἐν δόμοισι πανδόκοις ξένων.

² Cf. Campbell, *Cl. Rev.* IV, 304.

wandering (235-243). Opportunity for the lapse of time here is given, however, not by the lyric passage (143-178), but by leaving the stage vacant (234), which naturally brings the action of the play to a standstill even more than is the case during the stasima.¹

Take next the *Prometheus*: at 23 the alternation of day and night in his suffering is referred to by Hephaestus, and the effects of this suffering are plainly visible to Io when she sees him (563); Prometheus himself foresaw a long sojourn there (94).² But his sufferings in that place terminate with the cataclysm at the end of the play; the lapse of eons of time is represented by the several choral passages occurring in the interval (114-192, 397-435, 526-560, 887-906).

In the *Septem contra Thebas*, Eteocles leaves for battle at 719; at 792 a messenger enters with news that the battle is over; the brief space of seventy lines offers no time for all the incidents of the battle.

Now, naturally, where there is no change of setting and background, an apparent unity in time is produced by the necessity of continuous production of the play; but there is no inherent necessity for this unity. Let us consider the

¹ The stage is left vacant also in Sophocles' *Ajax*, 133; Euripides' *Alcestis*, 746; *Helena*, 385; *Iphigenia in Tauris*, 66 and 122. In the *Ajax* there is a gap of some time (though not of days), in which Odysseus, who has just left the stage, spreads abroad the news of Ajax' mad behavior. The chorus, entering apparently at once after his exit, tells of this procedure on his part:—

148-150: XO. τοιοῦσδε λόγους ψιθύρους πλάσσων
εἰς ὧτα φέρει πάντων Ὀδυσσεύς,
καὶ σφόδρα πεῖθει.

² 23-25: HΦ. ἀσμένῳ δέ σοι
ἡ ποικιλείμων νύξ ἀποκρύψει φάος,
πάχυνν θ' ἔψαν ἥλιος σκεδᾷ πάλιν.

561-564: ΙΩ. τίς γῆ; τί γένος; τίνα φῶ λεύσσειν
τόνδε χαλινούς ἐν πετρῖνοισιν
χειμαζόμενον;
τίνος ἀμπλακίας ποινὰς ὀλέκει;

93-95: ΠΡ. δέρχθηθ' οἷας αἰκταίσι
διακναύομενος τὸν μυριετῇ
χρόνον ἀθλεύσω.

nature of the Greek drama in its origin: it was a dialogue between a leader and a chorus. As this developed, scenes (*ἐπεισόδια*) and choral passages occurred alternately; the leader became the first actor; a second actor was added, then a third. May not a lyric passage, with its moralizing or generalizing sentiments, have been to the Greeks much the same as the dropping of the curtain to us?¹ If the story requires a lapse of time, it occurs; if not, well and good. No one disputes the principle of dramatic condensation in time,² so far as it relates to events that might conceivably happen on the same day;³ it is only where there is a lapse of a night or longer that the incongruity becomes marked. For this reason this paper will be confined almost entirely to the discussion of those plays which involve the passage of a night or more.

Our ancient authority for the time unity of the drama is Aristotle, *de Arte Poetica*, v, 4, p. 1449 b, 10 ff.: "Epic poetry agrees with Tragedy in so far as it is an imitation in verse of characters of a higher type. They differ, in that Epic poetry admits but one kind of metre, and is narrative in form. They differ, again, in their length: for Tragedy endeavors, so far as possible, to confine itself to a single revolution of the sun, or but slightly to exceed this limit; whereas the Epic action has no limits in time. This, then, is a second point of difference; though at first the same freedom was admitted in Tragedy as in Epic poetry."⁴

I wish to lay emphasis on the last clause: "though at first the same freedom was admitted in Tragedy as in Epic Poetry." This is so true that in six of the extant plays of Aeschylus

¹ Cf. Verrall, *The Ion of Euripides*, pp. xlviii-l.

² Cf. Furness, *Variorum Shakespeare, Hamlet*, I (1877), pp. xiv-xvii; *Merchant of Venice*, pp. 332-345.

³ Cf. Lounsbury, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 78-86.

⁴ Butcher's translation; cf. also pp. 289-291 of his commentary. The original, in Christ's edition, reads as follows: ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐποποιία τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ μέχρι μὲν τοῦ [μέτρου μεγάλου] μίμησις εἶναι σπουδαίων ἡκολούθησεν· τῷ δὲ τὸ μέτρον ἀπλοῦν ἔχειν καὶ ἀπαγγελίαν εἶναι, ταύτῃ διαφέρουσιν· ἔτι δὲ τῷ μήκει, ἡ μὲν οὖν μάλιστα περᾶται ὑπὸ μιᾶν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττειν, ἡ δὲ ἐποποιία ἀόριστος τῷ χρόνῳ, καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσιν· καίτοι τὸ πρῶτον ὁμοίως ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδαῖς τοῦτο ἐποιοῦν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔπεισιν.

there is a lapse of a night or more ; in four of these, of many nights. We shall later have reason to see why Aristotle formulated his rule as he did.

Among the extant plays of Sophocles, the *Trachiniae* is the only one transgressing the limits of the day. At 92 Deianira sends her son Hyllus in search of his father, Heracles, who has been away some fifteen months. He must be allowed at least some days for his search, or it will be folly to have him go at all. This time is represented by the choral passage 94-140. In the second scene Lichas arrives with the news that Heracles is at Cenaeum in Euboea ; through another messenger the story of the captive Iole becomes known to Deianira, and after another choral passage (497-530) she sends her recreant husband the supposed love-philter, the poisoned garment. After the next lyric passage (633-662), begins the episode in the course of which Hyllus enters with the news of his father's dreadful sufferings at Cenaeum. Now as Cenaeum is about twenty miles from Trachis in a direct line, we cannot believe that Lichas came from Cenaeum to Trachis and returned to Cenaeum ; that Heracles donned the garment, and Hyllus reached Trachis, all on one day ; to say nothing of the further events of the play, namely, the suicide of Deianira and the arrival and agonies of Heracles himself. Rather a night intervenes, or better two nights, between the arrival of Lichas with the news and the return of Hyllus, the lapse of time being indicated by the intervening lyric passages (497-530, 633-662).

Of Euripides' plays five claim our attention. First the *Heracidae* : In Scene I Demophon, king of Athens, gives protection at Marathon to the children of Heracles ; and Copreus, the Argive herald, leaves for home to obtain a military force (cf. 932). After a lyric passage (288-296), Demophon leaves also to marshal his men in defence of the strangers. This is Scene II. During the brief stasimon 353-380 several days elapse, for in the next episode (Scene III) Demophon tells the refugees that an Argive army under Eurystheus has now reached the borders of Attica and is there encamped (389-397). During the choral passage 608-

629 there is again a lapse of some time, a few days at least, for we learn immediately thereafter (in Scene IV) that Hyllus, son of Heracles, has arrived with an army, and has joined Demophon in opposing Eurystheus. A battle is imminent. The gap in time is necessary to allow Hyllus at his home in Trachis to learn of the needs and whereabouts of his brethren, and to reach the scene of the conflict.¹ After the next stasimon (748-783) comes (Scene V) the news of the battle, on the farther side of Attica, extending as far as the Scironian rocks (859-860), forty odd miles away. The interval between this and the preceding scene is evidently but long enough to allow for the battle; so also the next scene (VI, after stasimon 892-927), in which Eurystheus is brought in a captive, follows closely.

In Euripides' *Supplices*, the mothers of the chiefs who fell at Thebes gain Theseus' support in their quest to bury their sons' bodies. This is at Eleusis (1). At 364 Theseus leaves for Athens to gather an army (356). After a choral passage (365-380), allowing time for the trip to Athens and back, some twelve to fifteen miles each way, as well as for the mustering of his hosts, he returns with the army (391-392). Here there is a lapse of one night; possibly of more than one, for time has also been given for Creon at Thebes to learn of Theseus' intentions and to send a herald to Eleusis, who meets Theseus there, and forbids any attempt to secure the bodies for burial. In anger Theseus orders his whole army to move on Thebes (584-587). After his departure, there is a choral passage (598-633). Then a messenger arrives with news of Theseus' victory under the walls of Thebes (651 ff.). Evidently one or more nights have passed in the meantime, as Eleusis lies about thirty miles from Thebes.

In the *Hercules Furens*, Heracles returns to Thebes after a long absence, only to find Lycus, an usurper, seated on the throne. At 1163 Theseus comes to Thebes with an army to

¹ This interval may, however, be regarded as identical with that in 353-380, supposing word to have reached Hyllus as rapidly as possible after the departure of Copreus for Argos.

help Heracles drive out Lycus: this implies that he knew of Heracles' return before he set out to his aid. It would be ridiculous to suppose that Theseus left Athens for this purpose while still believing that Heracles was away from home. Hence between 523, when Heracles returns to Thebes, and 1163, when Theseus appears, there has been time for news of Heracles' arrival to reach Athens and for Theseus to march to Thebes.¹ This gap is filled by some one of the several lyric passages between these points in the drama.

In the *Iphigenia Aulidensis*, Agamemnon sends a secret messenger to Argos (111 f.) to stop Clytaemnestra from sending Iphigenia to Aulis (1-163). After a choral passage (164-302), comes the second scene. Menelaus has intercepted and brought back the messenger, and a quarrel ensues between the two royal brothers. By all probabilities Agamemnon should have sent his letter soon enough to reach Argos before Iphigenia's departure, but in the midst of the altercation the herald comes (414), announcing the arrival of Clytaemnestra and Iphigenia;² his speech is regarded as spurious by some,³ but its genuineness seems to be attested by Agamemnon's reference to the presence of his wife and daughter in the camp, at 456-459.⁴ Therefore the natural gap in time here is done away with by making Clytaemnestra bring Iphigenia hastily on receipt of the first message; while Agamemnon, in true Greek fashion, delays sending his warning note until too late.

¹ It is true however that Theseus, having just been rescued from Hades by Heracles (618-621, 1169-1171), may have acted on the supposition that Theseus would reach Thebes at the time when he did, and so have marched to his assistance without definite news of his arrival at home.

² 414-418:

ΑΓΓ. ὦ Πανελλήνων ἀναξ,
'Αγάμεμνον, ἤκω παῖδά σοι τὴν σὴν ἄγων,
ἦν 'Ιφιγένειαν ὠνόμαζας ἐν δόμοις.
μήτηρ δ' ὁμαρτεῖ, σῆς Κλυταιμνήστρας δέμας,
καὶ παῖς 'Ορέστης . . .

³ Cf. Paley's note to 414 in his edition of Euripides, III, p. 477.

⁴ 456-459: ΑΓΑ. καὶ γάρ μ' ἀπώλεσ' ἐπὶ κακοῖς ἃ μοι πάρα
ἐλθοῦσ' ἀκλητος. εἰκότως δ' ἄμ' ἔσπετο
θυγατρὶ νυμφεύσουσα καὶ τὰ φίλτατα
δῶσουσ', ἔν' ἡμᾶς ὄντας εὐρήσει κακοῦς.

In the *Andromache*, Hermione flees with Orestes to escape the vengeance of her husband, Neoptolemus, for her attempt on Andromache and her son, just thwarted by Peleus; Orestes utters threats against the life of Neoptolemus. A few lines further on, Peleus reappears, having learned of her flight, and is met by a messenger who announces that Neoptolemus has been slain at Delphi by the contrivances of Orestes, who was present there at the time; and that his body is now close at hand (1085 ff.).

This may be explained readily on the assumption that during the stasimon 1009-1046 a space of about a week or ten days passes. Orestes leaves Hermione in some safe place, hastens to Delphi, arriving there almost as soon as Neoptolemus, and then enters upon the plots which cause the death of the son of Achilles. This allows time for several days at Delphi and for the bringing home of the body. We may suppose that Peleus did not hear of Hermione's flight sooner, either on account of the seclusion of women or of the fact that he and Neoptolemus lived in separate though neighboring towns (16-23); or still better, that his learning of it is delayed for poetic considerations.¹

When we take up the comedy, our task is complicated by two factors not present in the tragedy. In the first place, there is greater freedom of treatment, no exact verisimilitude being sought by the poet. We cannot, therefore, expect a fantasy such as the *Birds* to fall into rational time limits: in it we find an immense amount of action crowded into a short space, uninterrupted by the succession of day and night,—the arrival of Pisthetaerus among the birds, his arguments before them, the visit of the poet, the oracle-monger and other frauds, the building of the city, the spread of bird-mania in the world, the sale of feathers to those afflicted with the new disease, the dickerings with the gods.

The second new factor is the structure of the old comedy itself, in that each play is divided more or less rigorously into two main parts, the preparatory part, including the

¹ For Verrall's view of the *Andromache*, cf. p. 40, n. 3, above.

ἀγών, leading up to some change in conditions; and the second part, consisting of scenes, often unconnected with each other, depicting the state of affairs resulting from the change. The two parts are usually separated by the parabasis. A good example is the *Wasps*: in the first part Philocleon is induced to give up his love for the law courts in favor of a private law court at home; in the second part of the play various ridiculous scenes are acted in this little court of his own. We must therefore be careful not to mistake this division for a real division in time; for while it does seem to imply a gap in time to allow the machinery, legal or otherwise, of the new régime to be put into motion, it must be regarded simply as an inherent attribute of the old comedy itself.

There are, however, four plays of Aristophanes which show the passage of considerable time.

In the *Acharnians*, Amphytheus' embassy to Sparta is completed between 133 and 175 — the space given by the Athenian assembly to the hearing of Sitalces' embassy. But the dismissal of the assembly at 173 leaves Dicaeopolis alone on the stage; this, with the consequent stoppage of the action of the play, gives the opportunity for the lapse of time necessary for Amphytheus' journey.¹

In the *Clouds* there can be but slight lapse of time, for at 17 we learn that it is past the twentieth of the month;² at 1131 it is but the twenty-fifth or twenty-sixth.³ Yet we must consider that three or four days, at least, have passed in the meantime, for in the interval Strepsiades has shown his inability to acquire the learning of the sophists, and

¹ 173-175: KHP. οἱ γὰρ πρυτάνεις λύνουσι τὴν ἐκκλησίαν.
ΔΙΚ. ὁμοὶ τάλας, μυττωτὸν ὅσον ἀπώλεσα.
ἀλλ' ἐκ Λακεδαιμονος γὰρ Ἀμφίθεος ὁδὶ.

² 16-18: ΣΤΡ. ἐγὼ δ' ἀπόλλυμαι,
ὁρῶν ἀγούσαν τὴν σελήνην εἰκάδας·
οἱ γὰρ τόκοι χωροῦσιν.

³ 1131-1134: ΣΤΡ. πέμπτη, τετράς, τρίτη, μετὰ ταύτην δευτέρα,
εἶθ' ἦν ἐγὼ μάλιστα πασῶν ἡμερῶν
δέδοικα καὶ πέφρικα καὶ βδελύττομαι,
εὐθὺς μετὰ ταύτην ἔσθ' ἔνη τε καὶ νέα.

his son Phidippides has received a complete sophistic education.¹

In the *Lysistrata* the women must be on the acropolis for some days, to bring about the results described. At 708 ff. *Lysistrata* describes the devices to which the women resort to try to go back to their husbands: in particular, she *yesterday* seized by the hair and dragged back one who was trying to fly down from the acropolis.² Some days have therefore elapsed, accounted for by the choral passage 614-705. At 881 we learn the exact number of days: Cinesias, coming to claim his wife Myrrhina, appeals piteously to her to come to him for the sake of their little child, "unwashed and unsuckled for the past five days."³ Again, at 1013, the Spartan herald leaves Athens for home, to secure the sending of ambassadors with full powers to conclude peace between the two cities; at 1074 the ambassadors reach Athens. Hence, in the intervening choral passage several days must be supposed to elapse.

The *Plutus* at 626 has a gap of a night for the cure of the god's blindness at the sanctuary of Aesculapius. This was filled by a choral passage that has been lost, and is now indicated merely by the word ΧΟΡΟΥ in the text.

The conclusion is, therefore, that time can elapse in the drama whenever the action is at a standstill. This occurs mainly during lyric passages, which are used frequently merely to separate scenes and to allow certain events to happen off the stage.⁴ Thus Verrall, despite the strictness

¹ The gap is during the education of Phidippides, and is to be placed during the choral song 1114-1130.

² 723-725: ΑΤΣ.

τὴν δ' ἐπὶ στρουθοῦ μίαν
ἥδη πέτεσθαι διανοομένην κάτω
ἐς Ὀρσιδόχου χθὲς τῶν τριχῶν κατέσπασα.

³ 880-881: ΚΙΝ.

οὐδ' ἐλεεῖς τὸ παιδίον
ἀλουτον ὃν καθήλων ἔκτην ἡμέραν;

⁴ In the Elizabethan drama there are some plays which conform closely to the time unities: examples are Jonson's *Alchemist* and Shakespeare's *Tempest*. On the other hand, in *Henry V*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Pericles* there is the same use of the chorus that we have in the classic drama; it accounts for lapse of

with which he holds to the twenty-four hour time rule of Aristotle,¹ admits that in the *Orestes* of Euripides the real function of the chorus "is simply to fill with their odes the necessary pauses in the action."² He has the right principle here, but he fails to apply it in its full extent.

Such standstill of the action occurs also, though less often, when the stage is empty, as in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* and Sophocles' *Ajax*; and even when one of the actors is alone on the stage, as in Aristophanes' *Acharnians*.

To go back to the passage in Aristotle's *Poetics* dealing with time unity in tragedy, we find that it is exactly true. At first there was little effort to preserve the unity: six of Aeschylus' seven extant plays involve the lapse of a night or more; in Sophocles only one of the seven contains such an interval. Now the earliest of Sophocles' extant plays, excepting the *Ajax*, was presented in 442, or sixteen years after Aeschylus' last extant play; hence the facts here accord exactly with the statement of Aristotle. Of Euripides' nineteen plays,³ none can be dated before 438, so that chronologically they are contemporaneous with those of Sophocles; some four or five of these⁴ show evidence of the passage of a night or more in the course of the play. But we could not expect Euripides to be quite so strict on this point as the graver and more dignified Sophocles, any more than we could expect Aristophanes to force his comedies into a twenty-four hour Procrustean bed.

The loss of the chorus, by the impoverishment of the city and citizens at the close of the fifth century before Christ,

time (also for change of place). This use of the chorus in the Elizabethan drama is common enough to be regarded as an accepted principle.

¹ Cf. p. 40, n. 3, above.

² *Four Plays of Euripides*, p. 216.

³ To include the *Rhesus*, of doubtful authenticity.

⁴ Haigh, *The Tragic Drama of the Greeks*, p. 244, considers the *Suppliants* the only one of Euripides' plays which requires the lapse of a night. He thinks that the *Andromache* does not necessarily presuppose the presence of Orestes at Delphi. He therefore regards Euripides as being quite as strict on this point as is Sophocles. A contrary view is given by Croiset, *Hist. Litt. Grecque*, III², p. 132, who considers Euripides quite as free as Aeschylus in his treatment of the time relations.

wrought havoc with this arrangement, for it was nothing less than the taking away of that member which gave unity to the whole play and separation to the individual scenes.¹ We have to judge now mainly by the plays of Plautus and Terence, following closely, as they do, their Greek originals. True, there is still occasionally a chorus, as in the *Rudens*, but it is rare and when employed plays a very subordinate part. But by the loss of the chorus the unity in time became more essential, and its violation more apparent. Consequently we notice all manner of incongruities of time in the Roman comedy;² but they mostly affect periods of less than twenty-four hours.³ Yet here a vacant stage may be supposed to allow a certain limited space of time to elapse, as in the *Mostellaria*, where Tranio sets out to the Piræus⁴ at 75 and is back at 348. The stage is unoccupied at 84 and 347.

Aristotle lived in the days of the new comedy, and at a time when tragedy was moribund; therefore when he set forth his twenty-four hour rule the practices of his own chorusless days may have exerted an undue influence upon him. At any rate, it is clear that a large percentage of the extant Greek dramas do not conform to it.

On this subject Campbell⁵ has said: "Now if in the *Eumenides* months or years might elapse between the exordium and what follows it, why may not the action of several days be silently assumed elsewhere between one

¹ Cf. Verrall, *The Ion of Euripides*, pp. xlviii-l.

² In the *Captivi*, Philocrates' trip from Aetolia to Elis is completed within the limits of a single day; but then Plautus was weak on Greek geography, for he makes Aetolia a town and Thebes a seaport (*Amphitruo*, 329). In Terence's *Andria*, Mysis, in a great hurry to fetch a midwife, delays to chat with Pamphilus (236-299) before doing her errand. Similarly, in Euripides' *Ion*, the servant seeking Creüsa to inform her of the death sentence passed upon her, lingers to tell the story to the chorus (1106-1228); cf. Haigh, *Tragic Drama of the Greeks*, p. 243. But in the *Ion* the poet is informing the audience of the progress of events (cf. p. 40, n. 3, above).

³ In the *Heauton Timorumenos* of Terence, a night passes between the second and third acts; cf. 410 — the first line of the third act — *Luciscit hoc iam*.

⁴ 66-67: TR. *Tace atque abi rus: ego ire in Piræum volo*

In vesperum parare piscatum mihi.

⁵ *Cl. Rev.* IV, 304.

epeisodion and the next? I say 'silently,' because the interval is, of course, not thought of. In the continuity of the idealized action the interruption of darkness and repose is eliminated, together with many of the irrelevances of actual life, by a tacit agreement between the poet and his audience."

The agreement, however, cannot be regarded as quite so tacit; rather is Croiset¹ nearer the truth when he says: "Un dialogue tragique, en effet, mesure le temps avec une certaine exactitude, parce qu'il ressemble à un dialogue ordinaire; le chant d'un chœur ne le mesure pas, parce qu'il appartient à la pure convention. Cela mit les poètes grecs fort à leur aise. Ils eurent l'air de respecter l'unité de temps, parce que les différents actes de leurs pièces se succédaient sans discontinuité apparente; mais, en fait, il y eut entre ces actes des espaces de temps absolument arbitraires, que les stasima remplissaient sans les mesurer. On pourrait dire, pour bien faire comprendre cette convention très particulière, qu'ils disposaient de deux sortes de durée; l'une réelle, dans les épisodes, l'autre tout idéale, pendant les stasima."

¹ *Hist. Litt. Grecque*, III², pp. 131-132.